



For Immediate Release
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More Utahns Getting The Message About Preventing Colon Cancer *Screening is up in Utah from a year ago, 2005 survey indicates*

(Salt Lake City, UT) — According to preliminary data from the 2005 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS), more Utahns (ages 50 and older) than ever before – some 51 percent – reported having had a colonoscopy or sigmoidoscopy in the past five years. That’s an increase of more than five percent from the BRFSS survey conducted in 2004.

“This is the best evidence to date that people are responding to awareness campaigns and public service announcements encouraging men and women over the age of 50 to get screened,” said Bronwen Calver, Program Specialist, Utah Department of Health (UDOH).

And while Utahns have gotten better at being screened, there is still a long way to go. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) only 37 percent of colon cancers are diagnosed at an early, localized stage, mainly due to people not being screened.

“Screening can find colon cancer early, when treatment can be most effective,” said Dr. Joe Eyring, surgeon for the Center for Colon and Rectal Diseases. “Screening is the best way to find polyps or growths in the colon or rectum, which can be removed before they become cancerous. People age 50 or older should contact a physician to discuss which screening option may be best for them.”

Age 50 is crucial when it comes to preventing colon cancer – because more than 90 percent of cases are diagnosed in people age 50 years and older, according to the CDC.

One example is Utah resident Reggie Price – diagnosed with colon cancer in 2003. He strongly encourages people to get screened before it’s too late. “Doctors had told me that if I had gone in

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[for a screening] when I was 50 years old it would have been a simple procedure to do nothing more than to snip out a polyp,” Price said.

But Mr. Price’s condition was more serious. “The polyp had developed into a tumor that ended up metastasizing, going into my lymphatic system, lungs, and thyroid, and causing me the problems that I have now,” he said. “I underwent six weeks of intense chemotherapy and radiation and seven surgeries ... after the first surgery I had to heal for a few months and then I started my regimen of more chemo and that’s where it really started getting bad.”

There are several different types of colon cancer screening tools available. Individuals wanting to get screened may want to check with their insurance company to find out which screening tools are covered under their plan. The UDOH Health Resource Line at 1-888-222-2542 is also available for people who want to learn more about colon cancer screening tools or resources for the uninsured or underinsured.

UCAN's mission is to reduce cancer incidence and mortality for all Utahns through collaborative efforts. They work in conjunction with numerous organizations that provide cancer related medical services, screening and support programs.

About UCAN

UCAN is comprised of 80 community partners including private and non-profit agencies, hospitals, universities, UDOH, the American Cancer Society and Huntsman Cancer Institute. UCAN is funded in part by grants from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For additional information, people may call UCAN’s health resource line at 1-888-222-2542 or visit www.ucan.cc

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public’s health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.